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747 The poverty of the country prevents the development of
794 organized private effort to assist the needy. The only such efforts--albeit sporadical--are those of the churches, which have always been centers of social assistance as well as of spiritual life. The impoverishment of the churches after World War II caused most of these projects to disappear so that today church welfare activities are restricted to the community, and local parish priests have meager funds, but funds which are continuously being given to assist those of the parish who are in need.

745 In Hungary public effort to assist the needy was always considerable. The pre-war social security system of Hungary was one of the first in Europe, and it served as a model for many other countries. The Communists have extended the coverage to large masses, but under their rule the economic status of the country worsened and the actual social security benefits depreciated along with incomes so that they do not represent any real defence for the individual against financial disaster.

The number of persons covered by the social security system, presently being administered by the Trade Union Federation, is almost 6 million, approximately 60 per cent of the entire population. The most important benefits are: paid vacations; the coverage of medical

depression and again later in consequence of the war-time shortage of materials for building. During the depression the aforementioned credit schemes and tax exemptions helped the expansion of building programmes. Since the beginning of the war a specially created board and numerous bylaws regulate the allotment of living space according to priority of socially justifiable claims. To-day the building programme is centred on defence projects, family welfare and social service housing.

Widespread social projects.

We may briefly mention here those socially important projects of the Government which aim at the improvement of the general health and proper diet of the farmers who constitute the majority of our population. For instance, the Government ordered the free distribution of sugar among certain sections of the agrarian community who had previously been without it. In poorer farm districts the Government distributes large quantities of sugar among children and nursing mothers. We shall discuss in another chapter free meals in rural schools, public health medical service to agrarian families, expectant mothers and infants; also marriage grants to farm labourers.

Churches and Societies.

We have given only a brief outline of the public welfare policy, which, although it expresses the social consciousness of the state and its will to further social advancement, paints only a one-sided picture of the country's social efforts as a whole. To complete the picture, mention should be made of the extensive welfare work done by different private social organizations, the Christian Chur-

[cf. category 116, pp 23–30 --- Analyst]

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ches leading the way. The Roman Catholic "Actio Catholica" maintains a separate social service organization. The concerted and unremitting efforts of the Roman Catholic church organizations follow the principles laid down by the Primate of Hungary. The Catholic parishes have been dealing with begging by well organized and proven methods, and are continuously helping the needy. The synod of the Protestant Church directs the Protestant congregations in the support of certain social welfare activities, and through the "Friendly Alliance" (Szeretet Szövetségek) it participates in country-wide social welfare drives and other far reaching movements. The Evangelical Church works along similar lines. The Churches often planned and carried out social welfare enterprises in those precarious times when restrictions on the sovereignty of the country and its public finances impeded the work of the state.

In addition there are over a thousand charitable organizations in Hungary, and a great many of the clubs — through their central organizations or independently — are active in social welfare work. These societies, especially their central organizations (mostly clubs for women), are instrumental in carrying out certain phases of the public welfare policy, and do exemplary work in child welfare, war relief work and the supervision of rural sanitation. The Government supports the work of the above societies with grants-in-aid.

"*Levente.*"

The national defence organization of Hungarian youth (*levente* organization) is engaged in important social welfare work in different parts of the country. The *leventes*

883 take an active part in the state-sponsored charitable collec-
747 tions. For instance, they carried out the collection of winter clothing in 1942 for the soldiers fighting at the front, when they collected 200 freight car loads of winter clothing and textiles. The *leventes* also helped with the collection of money for the Red Cross and for the aid of soldiers' families. One of their noteworthy achievements was the organization of the "Soldiers' Christmas" drive. During this drive they called on every family of soldiers fighting at the front who were wounded or missing, and also called at the homes of every enlisted man. They wrote reports on every case in their survey, and at Christmas time sent gifts to the soldiers and took presents to the soldiers' families.

The work of the "Husbandry Branch" of the *leventes* deserves notice. This work is done in rural communities where they try to improve conditions in the villages by guiding the spare-time activities of the poor into profitable
[242] channels. Instruction is given in vegetable culture (particularly peas and beans), also in methods of increasing the production of oil-seed. Organizing the systematic saving and collecting of waste material, scrap iron and textiles, was done by them.

The improvement in the standard of public health was due, directly and indirectly, to this organization. It is nation-wide in extent, and each member is compelled to undergo periodical medical examinations free of charge. The medical organization which looks after them has mobile hospital units which practically call at the *leventes'* homes. The poorer ones are given vitamin preparations to help their growth. Their social well-being is fostered by building "Levente homes," by sending them to summer

camps and by supplying clothing and shoes to the needy members. As all young men are members it is the most wide-spread organization in the country both from a national defence and social welfare standpoint.

III. AGRARIAN SOCIAL POLICY.

In the first decade following the Treaty of Trianon social conditions in the rural districts deteriorated in consequence of the changed economic structure of the country, which was aggravated by the following conditions. The supply of labourers far exceeded the demands made by diversified farming, the apportionment of the land in certain districts was very unequal, the distribution of the rural population varied greatly and the ranks of the rural proletariat were enormously increased.

Fifty-two per cent. of the Hungarian population is engaged in farming. Two thirds of this number (3 million including their families), were farm labourers and small farmers who had to supplement their meagre incomes by working for wages on larger farms. The density of the rural population was 59 persons per square kilometre, twice as much as the density of the Danish and French rural population and decidedly more than that of Germany. It goes without saying that the density of the agrarian population in Eastern Europe is much less than in Hungary.

In a less accentuated form the agrarian problems of present-day Hungary are the same, since the re-occupation of former Hungarian territories hardly altered the situation. The land reforms carried out by the Succession

assist deserving poor families with many children, especially in the rural districts. The ONCsA is not a relief-distributing agency but an institution which forms the integral part of the community and of the local administrative bodies. It endeavours to improve the lot of the poorer rural population economically, morally and intellectually by raising its living standards and by promoting the cause of social adjustment.

Welfare inspection service.

To carry out effectively the novel features and manifold objectives of the new social welfare policy, the National Social Welfare Inspection Board was established, and in the counties and many towns co-operative social welfare societies were founded which made it possible for the poorest classes to engage in productive work. How important these projects are for Hungarian society is shown by the following statistics: in 1942 there were more than 259,000 families in Hungary with four or more children and in these families the total number of children amounted to one million two hundred and fifty thousand. The majority of the large families (212,000 families with a total of more than a million children) live in rural districts.

The National Social Welfare Inspection Board and the 93 co-operative societies have accomplished a tremendous amount of work since their inauguration in the different parts of the country. The value of their work can be appraised only by the collection of reliable social statistics which is done in connection with every serious social activity. This survey is carried out by 178 field workers and 750 Green Cross nurses. The latter also provide the expert guidance of the movement.

Rural housing.

Among the manifold activities of the National Folk and Family Protection Bureau the foremost was the assistance of large families to build their own homes. With the financial help of the Bureau 5410 simple but spacious houses have been erected in typical Hungarian style up to date. Besides this 194 families were helped to buy new and larger houses and 2169 families were assisted in renovating their homes. The amount spent by the Bureau on its housing activities already exceeds 40 million pengős. When evaluating the Bureau's work it should be taken into consideration that its building activities have commenced during the serious war-time shortage of building materials. The project at present is not only continuing but is expanding to reach ever wider circles of the population. The post-war plans of the Bureau call for the erection of 2000 more new houses.

Farm tenancy.

Another important branch of the activities of social welfare societies assists the impoverished large agrarian families in buying farms and setting them up in farm tenancies. In this respect the social welfare organizations work in close co-operation with land reform agencies, thereby ensuring that the deserving large families are given priority in the allocation of the land distributed under the land reform. Since the living standards of the poor cannot be raised simply by putting them on farms, the welfare societies endeavour to procure for them the requisites of farming. They give them loans free of interest, help them in purchasing farm equipment and stock, and

besides obtaining brood stock from the state for the poorer farmers, they also secure the occasional loan of thoroughbred stock for breeding purposes. Up to date almost 20,000 large agrarian families have been aided on these lines. Welfare societies also help the poor farmers who are engaged in vegetable and fruit gardening, bee-keeping, silkworm culture, rabbit breeding and collecting medicinal herbs.

Handicrafts.

In several villages the welfare societies organized the villagers into different handicraft groups to alleviate the effects of seasonal unemployment during the winter. To foster the handicraft activities of the villagers, welfare societies advance the sale of their products and help them with the purchase of raw materials.

Marriage Grants.

Marriage grants to young people is one method of social welfare aid to the agrarian population. A noteworthy feature of the contracts governing these loans is that repayments are progressively cancelled upon the birth of each child. These loans of 1000 pengös made possible the foundation of many new Hungarian families. After the birth of the fourth child the outstanding part of the loan is automatically cancelled.

Education.

The National Folk and Family Protection Bureau is working on a project which will subsidize the education of the children of farm labourers. It is expected